No. 54

The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

"I'll make your dream come true, girlie," he exclaimed, reaching for her hand. "Let me be your friend and protector. I'll advance you the money if you want it that way."

R. of M. G., No. 54.

Copyright 1926 by
THE NIELEN PUBLISHING CO.
Cincinnati, Ohio.

WITHOUT asking for it, the salesman gave Betty some very valuable information about New York and the various theatrical booking-agencies. "I believe you'll make good," was the encouraging remark as he rose. "And I wish you all the luck in the world. But never forget the things your dad and mother taught you."

Betty liked this about the man. She held out her hand impulsively.

"Thank you," she smiled up at him. "I won't forget."

When a few hours later the train drew into New York, she asked to be directed to a respectable rooming house district. The woman in charge of the information office directed her to a Mrs. Armond on West 24th Street.

"You'll find her perfectly safe," was the added information. "And she won't be hard on you if you can't pay your rent promptly. Mrs. Armond is a woman with much experience and a big heart. Give her this card and tell her I sent you."

Betty smiled her thanks and walked away.

The first thing she did was to procure a room in the house suggested to her. But to find a suitable position was quite another matter.

The theatrical business in New York had dwindled down as never before. Thousands of chorus girls and dancers were out of employment and thronged the various agencies day after day.

Some of them were desperate and offered to work for any kind of a salary.

Betty took a quick liking to the woman who owned the rooming house in which she had found shelter.

And this woman was indeed far above the ordinary in many respects. There was about her an air of re-

finement and kindliness that made her a favorite among those living under her roof.

Had Betty confided in Mrs. Armond, she might have been spared one of the most bitter experiences that can come to a woman.

As it was, the young woman held herself aloof. She wanted to be entirely independent and thus avoid being under obligations to anyone. She paid her room rent punctually for one thing.

But for some inexplicable reason she remained away from Mrs. Armond when she might have done well to seek the latter's advice.

Every morning Betty perused the New York newspapers. She felt confident that through this means she would sooner or later find something that would suit her.

The young woman, in her reflective moments, realized that her best stock in trade were her good looks and her ability to dance.

Quite naturally she preferred the stage, because of her natural talent.

One morning she came across an advertisement which read:

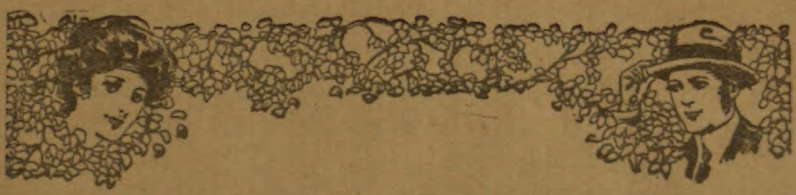
> Wanted: Refined and pretty young girl for the stage. Must be a good dancer. Exceptional opportunity for the right party. Apply by letter only. Photograph must be sent with application.

The advertisement was signed by one "James Farrell" in care of the Olympic Theater.

It seemed that the eagerly awaited opportunity had come at last. There was a pleasant smile on Betty's face as she pondered over the matter. Her mind was quickly made up to apply for the position.

"I haven't a photograph of myself," she mused. "I wonder if Mr. Farrel would object to my calling in person? Well, he can't do no more than refuse me. It is worth trying, anyway."

She dressed with the greatest care and went upon her quest.



Chapter 175

THE ACTRESS.

BETTY HARDING, or Betty Procter, as she chose to be called, was one of those girls who attract attention easily. For one thing her complexion was matchless. And she had a pair of wonderfully innocent looking blue eyes. Her wealth of auburn hair caused men to stop and look after her as she passed. And when they looked they beheld a still greater charm.

Her figure, though slender and almost thin, was of the willowy type with plenty of curves. And she walked with the free rythmic motion of a dancer.

But what impressed the casual observer most in Betty was, the sweet humorous touch about her lips, which quite often turned to melancholy. Past bitter experiences had left their marks on her, and there were some things she could not forget.

After having made some inquiries as to the location of the Olympic Theater, Betty hurried on.

She was somewhat disappointed when she found it to be an old building that had been abandoned recently. This was not at all what she had expected.

For some minutes she walked around it, rather skeptical.

There was no sign of life anywhere. When she was about to retrace her step and go back to her lodgings, she noticed a shaft of light coming from a window on which the word "Office" was painted in black letters.

Without hesitation she entered the lobby and turned to the right.

There was a door marked "Private."

"That must be the manager's office," the girl murmured, and knocked.

"Come in," said a gruff voice.

She entered.

Before an immense desk littered with papers and manuscripts sat a heavily built man with a florid face.

He gave a little gasp as he beheld the beautiful apparition standing near the door.

"What can I do for you?" he asked, smiling affably enough.

"I came in answer to the advertisement in the newspaper," the young woman said falteringly. "I had no photograph to send you with my written application, so I——"

"So you came in person, eh?" the man cut in, smiling again.

"Yes, sir." Betty blushed.

"Well," he replied in a slow drawl, "I suppose I may make an exception in your case. Take a seat, please."

She did so, the soft blush still in her cheeks.

For a long moment that man studied her features, then he gave a slight nod as if he was entirely satisfied with what he saw.

"Are you Mr. Farrel?" Betty ventured timidly.

"That is my name. Miss——"

"Procter—Betty Procter," she supplied hastily.

"Miss Procter," he resumed, that same affable smile still in evidence. "I am the manage of the company now playing at the 'Strand.' And I also engage chorus girls and dancers for several other companies."

"Ah, I see," Betty smiled in return.

After another pause during which he again fell to studying her face, she inquired:

"Is there a company playing at this theater?"

The manager shook his head.

"No, Miss Procter," he responded. "This building is used for rehearsing only. As I said before, I have several attractions to furnish with new material. All the young women who aspire to become members of a regular company receive their first instructions and training here.

"This is a sort of a central station from which capable singers and dancers are sent when and where they are needed. And I might also tell you that here we distinguish the wheat from the chaff.

"We don't keep a girl who has not marked talent. The one blessed in that direction—and with good looks, of course, usually draws the first assignment."

Betty nodded. This explanation was plausible enough. And now came the question she feared to answer.

"Have you had any experience, Miss Procter?"

She liked to be addressed as Miss Procter, and more firmly decided to keep that name in the future.

"I — I am afraid I haven't professionally," she murmured hesitatingly. "I did quite a bit of dancing and singing at college, and the professors used to tell me that I——"

"They told you that you had a wonderful future on the stage before you," Mr. Farrel interrupted with a grin. "Well, I don't doubt but what you'll make good, and I feel disposed to give you a trial. By the way, where are you from?" he asked suddenly.

"Chicago." The word left her lips in almost a whisper.

"Chicago, eh? A pretty big town. Did you live there all your life?"

"No, sir." Her perceptible frown caused her in-

terrogator to chuckle.

"Don't like it very much, do you, Miss Procter?"

"Not at all," the latter declared with some vehemence.

"How long did you stay in Chicago?" was the next question.

Bety showed plainly that she disliked discussing the city in which she had seen so much trouble. She wanted to forget it and all the people she knew there.

"Can't you remember?" the manager prodded.

"Not very well," was the evasive retort.

"Well, it doesn't matter a whole lot," he remarked meditatively. "Personally I never liked the big town by the lake. And I don't suppose you are wild about it, either, are you?"

"No, sir," Betty declared with spirit.

Another pause, then:

"Are you alone in New York?" from Mr. Farrel.

"I am."

"Have you any relatives?"

"None," came back promptly. And it was true since her sister and Gordon had shown so plainly that they wanted nothing to do with her

The manager appeared to be pleased at this. He made several notes on a sheet of paper lying on his desk before him. Then he picked up a book and handed it to Betty.

"Read a few sentences, Miss Procter," he requested. "I would like to hear you enunciate and also hear the carrying power of your voice."

She took the book.

"Now read slowly and without raising your voice," Mr. Farrel advised.

Betty read several passages in her low trebble.

Quite unconsciously she put all the expression in

the lines the situation called for. And her enunciation was clear and distinct.

Mr. Farrel stopped her.

"That was admirably done," he exclaimed. "And I feel tempted to give you a chance. Of course, I may not be able to assure you work as a dancer. You have the personality to fit into most any part. If you are not too particular I'll——"

"I am willing to take anything you have open," she cut in eagerly.

"As a rule we require references," the manager went on. "Can you supply them?"

She thought for a moment.

"The only professional work I done was for a manager in Chicago," she fibbed. "And it did not amount to much. And he is not the kind of a man who is fair enough to give an employe who left him the benefit of any doubt. I am afraid you have to take my word."

The last words were uttered in a trembling tone, and it seemed that the girl was dangerously close to tears.

Farrel saw that she was laboring under emotion and some sort of mental strain.

He refrained from asking any more questions. He knew by instinct that this beautiful creature had passed through a hard school. Those coming from Chicago usually had.

"We pay all beginners twenty-five dollars a week," he announced presently. "Would you be willing to start for that?"

"I would be satisfied with that amount to start," she answered. "But as soon as I have shown my ability, I expect to be paid according to what I am worth."

"There will be no trouble about that, my dear," was the response. "I don't doubt for a minute that you

are capable. Now, let me see, I want to place you, if I can, with a company where you can show as a solo dancer. I believe I have such a vacancy right now."

He began to rush through a heap of papers, then finally reached for a loose-leaf booklet and perused its pages.

"That is too bad, I must have been mistaken," he said, as if speaking to himself. "There isn't anything in the dancing line." Then aloud: "I have an excellent opening in a play, that is, if you care to take a speaking part."

"I'll take it," Betty replied quickly.

"The opportunity I have to offer you is an extremely good one," he told her. "One of my leading ladies has not been in the best of health lately. It is quite possible that she may resign, and I must have someone who is capable to study the part and eventually take her place."

"What is the name of the play?" Betty inquired.

"'The Shock Punch'. Are you familiar with it, Miss Procter? The play was written recently and it has made quite a hit."

"I have heard of it," she announced.

"Do you think you could play a part that requires depth of feeling and emotional acting?" he inquired.

"I think I can, sir."

He was regarding her with a stealthy, sidelong glance.

"Would you like it?" he asked.

"I can not say that I would like it particularly," Betty replied in all frankness. "But I have no choice in the matter. I must find employment at once. And you may rest assured that I will do my best to make a success of it."

"Well, that is good enough, my dear Miss Procter.

I like the way you express yourself. No doubt you have the brain and the intelligence. I know you have the looks."

He glanced at her steadily for a space then added:

"Since I came to my office this morning, I have interviewed seven applicants. Not one of them came near being what I want. Your musical voice and charming personality, as well as your outward evidence of refinement, convince me that I can trust you safely with the important part of an understudy.

"Of course," he continued. "It will mean hard work for several weeks. You must master the lines and be able to step in at a moment's notice and make good, too. If you are sure you can do that, the chance is yours, Miss Procter.

"And I want to say also that your pay begins with your first rehearsal. It is paid on Saturday of each week. As I mentioned before we start all beginners at twenty-five dollars per week."

Betty expressed herself with so much confidence and enthusiasm that Farrel could not help but smile.

"Now, if you are ready to sign a contract, we can arrange the details," he said.

"I am quite ready, Mr. Farrel."

He took a large sheet of paper from one of the drawers in his desk. It was a printed form used by theatrical managers.

With a flourishing hand he affixed his signature to it, then asked the girl to sign her name.

In her eagerness she did not stop to read the contract. It did not matter much to her, for had she not been given a chance to become an actress on the speaking stage?

This formality over, she rose to leave. It never occurred to her that she should have asked for a copy of

the contract. And she did not give that a thought as she hurried home.

Betty was in a better frame of mind than she had been for many days.

She had always had a secret ambition to become a real actress. Dancing was hard work and paid poorly. But as the leading woman of a legitimate drama a new era dawned before her.

The future was frought with a good many possibilities. What if hers was to be a real success?

Might it not bring back to her the respect and esteem of those who regarded her no longer fit to mingle with decent folk? She thought particularly of her brother-in-law, Philip Gordon and Alice. It was distinctly worth while to fight for success on the stage which would bring her the recognition of former friends and acquaintances.

With these ideas firmly imbedded in her mind, she faced the future with new hope. The past was behind her and she made a determined effort to forget it.

As Betty Procter, a really good stage name, her looks and talents, she had the foundation. To this, of course, she added the obvious good will and friendliness of Mr. Farrel.

Chapter 176

CHORUS GIRLS

ALL THAT night Betty Procter dreamed of future greatness on the stage. She saw her name emblazoned in front of a Broadway Theater. And she dreamed, too, that she saw Phil Gordon and Alice in the audience, staring at her with unbelieving eyes, heard their astonished gasp and watched them as they left the auditorium hastily to seek her in the dressing room.

She was awakened rudely by a sudden detonation which came through the partly open window. It was very much like a shot.

Pale-faced and startled she ran to see what it was. In the street below a chauffeur was calmly taking a bursted tire from his automobile.

Betty watched him from behind the lace curtain and smiled to herself.

"I hope my new venture will not end as abruptly as my dream did," she murmured. "I am glad to have a chance to study a speaking part. And I'll make good, too. If hard work and perseverance mean anything. I am bound to make good."

Fully determined to make the best of the opportunity offered her, she dressed quickly and hurried away for another meeting with Mr. Farrel.

A few little details were to be arranged, then rehearsals would begin.

With the pink flush of enthusiasm in her cheeks she crowded all unpleasant thoughts out of her mind.

Only when she thought of her past, her eyes be-

came moist.

When she reached the old theater she was surprised to see a number of young girls enter by the side door.

What did this mean?

Were they all applicants for the position already given her? And why did they slip through that side door in a manner that told plainly that this was not the first time?

So with her mind just a bit disturbed, she walked into Mr. Farrel's office.

The manager was busily engaged looking over some papers and he was not alone.

With him was a rather young looking man with a shock of long black hair and a face that suggested the foreigner.

"Ah, good morning, Miss Procter," Farrel cried upon perceiving her.

"Good morning," she answered timidly.

"How are you," he said, looking her over critically. "This is a foolish question, of course. You seem to be in the best of health judging by your red cheeks, and bright eyes. Very becoming indeed."

Betty blushed painfully at this compliment.

"Are you ready for work," the manager went on, smiling blandly.

"Yes, sir," came from her quivering lips.

Farrel nodded, then turned to the man beside him.

"Mr. Cavello, meet Miss Procter," he said by way of an introduction. "Miss Procter—Mr. Cavello."

The two bowed to each other.

"Mr. Cavello is my assistant," the manager informed her. "He will take you in hand. Come in and see me again when you are through with your first rehearsal, please."

Having uttered these words, Farrel wheeled in his chair and went back to the papers on his desk.

The assistant manager smiled and motioned Betty to follow him. He took her through a small door into what looked like the auditorium of the theater. There were but a few rows of seats left which faced the stage.

So far as appearances went the place had little to recommend it. If anything, it looked rather dilapidated.

In the dim light she could see about ten girls lined up on the stage. They were being drilled by a hard-faced, bald-headed individual who reminded Betty of a common barroom loafer.

His voice was coarse and rasping, and the language he used was positively shocking.

Betty looked askance at Mr. Cavello. He evidently read the question in her eyes and hastened to answer.

"Those girls are a stupid lot," he told her. "They are being drilled for chorus work. Do you see the one at the left end? She is one of the over-modest kind that will never succeed in this profession. She is afraid some one might see her ankles when she dances."

"It isn't necessary, is it?" Betty questioned.

"No, not now," came back with a laugh. "But she will show more than her ankle when she gets a steady job as a chorus girl."

"Ah, I see," said Betty.

"She is of the type that must be told in plain English what is expected of her," he went on. "I suppose if the dancing master told her to put on a pair of tights, she'd faint."

Miss Procter had grown rather silent.

She was watching the girls on the stage go through their movements in a manner that bespoke embarrassment.

There was not the least doubt in her mind but that they were all newcomers. Some of them were somewhat shabbily dressed, but all were young and pretty.

"You over there at the end," the dancing master shouted brutally, "lift your skirts and kick out when I count three."

The girl to whom these words were addressed blushed violently.

She complied with the request while the others looked on and giggled. It was easily discernible that this girl was utterly unused to that sort of thing.

Perhaps circumstances had driven her to seek employment that was so obviously distasteful to her.

Betty felt sorry for this sweet-faced young girl.

"As soon as they are through," Mr. Cavello's voice said close to her ear, "I'll rehearse with you."

She gave a slight nod.

A feeling of relief stole over her, for she was glad that she was not one of those girls aspiring to become members of a chorus. And she thoroughly disliked the man who was drilling them.

She cast a sidelong glance at Mr. Cavello and drew comparisons. There was a tremendous difference between these two men.

One had the manners of a brute, while the other bore the outward earmarks of a gentleman born and bred.

As her eyes wandered back to the stage, the girls were being given some more instructions. And she counted them as they filed out. There were ten of them.

The man who had acted as dancing-master disappeared also.

"Now our turn comes," announced Mr. Cavello. "Come with me Miss Procter."

They walked down the aisle and climbed upon the

stage. Betty was given a manuscript.

She glanced at the lines marked for her, while Cavello essayed to play the opposite character, which was that of the leading man.

At first they read the dialogue and remained apart. In the second act the scene called for some emotional acting.

It was a love scene.

Mr. Cavello, throwing his manuscript on the little table between them did his part with such fervor and realism that Betty drew back, her face crimson.

When he embraced her, as the scene called for, he almost crushed her against his bosom. And the kiss he gave her was decidedly not a stage kiss.

"Please don't," she whimpered, visibly embarrassed.

"But that is part of the stage business," Cavello frowned.

"We can dispense with that for the present," Betty answered very quietly.

He muttered something under his breath Betty was not able to understand. The play was read through entirely three times, and the man kept his distance.

It was plainly evident, however, that he did so with continual self-restraint.

"That will do for this morning, Miss Procter," he declared grumblingly as they finished. "Come back this afternoon at three."

Betty left him and walked to the manager's office.

"How did you like your first rehearsal?" Mr. Farrel asked, smiling in his most pleasant fashion.

"Oh, very well," she replied, not daring to speal the truth.

He looked her over with a glance that was apprais ing, then said:

"You seem tired, poor child. No doubt the strain was a little too much for you. Come and rest for a while. What you need is something to revive your strength. A little drink won't harm you before you start for home."

She offered no objections to this. The manager filled two glasses with what he called "grape juice."

But when the girl tasted it, she found it to be champagne.

"How do you like it?" he inquired.

"It is good," she replied truthfully, for it was not the first time in her life Betty Procter had ever tasted champagne. "And it is very sweet, that is what I like about it."

"Well, here is to your success," the man cried jovially.

"Thanks."

For the first time she gave him a smile that came without being forced. It was a smile that lit up her face and enhanced its beauty tenfold.

She emptied her glass. Farrel watching her as the color mounted into her cheeks.

When she was ready to leave, he escorted her to the door and bowed her out with repeated assurances of his good will and most friendly expressions.

Betty started out briskly. She had imbibed of the fluid that revives the drooping spirit, and she was in a very agreeable frame of mind.

She had walked several squares, and as she was about to turn the next corner she came face to face with a young girl, whose face seemed strangely familiar. They glanced at each other and passed on.

Suddenly it occurred to Betty who this girl was. She was one of the ten flappers being drilled for chorus work at the Olympic Theater.

And she was the very modest girl who had stood

at the end, and who had been subjected to such brutal treatment from the dancing-master.

Following an impulse, Betty wheeled about and ran after her.

"Just a moment, please," she cried.

The young girl stopped and gazed wonderingly at the speaker.

"I saw you dancing at the Olympic," Betty said with a pleasant smile. "I am also rehearsing at that theater. I should very much like to know you. My name is Betty Procter."

"Mine is Jane Wilton," the other girl returned, extending her little hand.

They shook hands cordially and strolled on together, chatting and exchanging confidences as only girls can. For over an hour they sat in Central Park and told all about each other.

Jane Wilton narrated how she had come to New York from a little town in the country at the urgent solicitation of a traveling man whom she had learned to know, and who seemed to have taken a great interest in her.

"You are far too pretty to waste your life on a farm," he had told her. "I'll give you a letter of introduction to Mr. Farrel, a theatrical manager, who is an old friend of mine. You can safely trust yourself in his hands."

And Jane Wilton, having no relations except an old, grumpy aunt with whom she lived, had decided to make her own living and came to New York to become an actress.

Jane was perhaps the least talented for the profession, but she was unusually pretty.

And she was childishly innocent. She was one of those unfortunate young girls, raised in prudery and ig-

norance.

"I am to have my first chance to-morrow night at a swell private affair," she told proudly. "Oh, I am so happy. I just know I'll make good. I am being rehearsed in a special song and dance."

Betty looked at the girl somewhat skeptically.

"A private affair?" she asked curiously.

"Yes," Jane hastened to reply. "Mr. Farrel told me that a swell party is being given by a New York millionaire and his wife. I am on the program with several others."

"Oh," said Betty, "that is different."

After another lengthy chat they parted. Jane Wilton promised Betty that she would call at her lodging the morning following the entertainment and tell her all about it.

"I hope you'll make a hit, dearie," were Betty's last words. "And don't forget to come to see me."

"I won't," promised Jane again, and hurried to her own little hall room on a side street.

Miss Procter trudged homeward in a rather thoughtful mood. Her thoughts were all of the young and lovely girl who had just left her.

She wondered vaguely if Jane Wilton realized the danger of her position. Her childish innocence and inexperience, as well as her youthful beauty were the things most desired by a certain type of men which haunt cabarets and roof gardens in New York at night.

And while Betty made up her mind to take this young girl under her wing, she prayed that no harm might come to her.

But the unseen hand was already at work, for a letter had been dispatched to a certain man by Farrel. Jane Wilton was in danger—yes, in grave danger.

Little did she know Mr. Farrel and his cunning

ways of deceiving girls, especially young girls who were good to look at.

Little did she know what was planned for her down-fall.

Her happiness was to be only temporary. Her climb to fame was only to end in a mighty fall.

Chapter 177

JANE WILTON

IT WAS the following noon. The morning rehearsal was over and all the girls including Betty Procter had left, except one—Jane Wilton. She was being detained by the assistant manage and put through a song and dance. What she lacked in ability she made up for in an earnest desire to please.

In the meantime Farrel was seated in his office with a man dressed in the height of fashion. And this man requires no introduction to the reader, for it was none other than Mr. Fredericks, the Chicago multi-millionaire, who had come to New York in search of pleasure.

The conversation was being carried on in guarded whispers.

"I was pleased to get your letter Farrel," Fredericks was saying. "This young girl you mention — is she all you claim for her?"

"Absolutely," the other replied without hesitation.

"And is she—is she safe?"

"Safe? I should say, yes. She was sent to me fresh from the country a few weeks ago. She is so ignorant you could make her believe the moon is made out of green cheese."

"Has she any close relatives, Farrel?"

"None. She has an old aunt who was glad to get rid of her. You are not taking any chances. She won't squeal."

These questions and answers were uttered in whispers, after which Fredericks said aloud:

"Well, I am really anxious to meet her. Where is she?"

"She will be here directly," Farrel replied. "Cavello is drilling her for the last time."

A slight pause ensued.

"What is your price?" Fredericks inquired.

"Five hundred. You can give me a check."

"I want to see her first," the other demurred.

"Alright," came back. "She will be here in a few minutes. Now be careful what you do or say in her presence. If you accept the bargain give me the sign by pulling out your watch. Then leave the rest to me and follow my cue."

Fredericks nodded, then lit a cigar and began to watch the door.

Ten minutes had barely elapsed when Jane Wilton entered. She looked bewitching beautiful with her pink cheeks and eyes sparkling with youthful enthusiasm.

Farrel rose quickly when he saw her hesitate near the door.

"I want you to meet Mr. Fredericks, the gentleman who is giving the party to-night," he said smilingly.

Jane came forward shyly.

"Miss Wilton—Mr. Fredericks," said Farrel.

The young girl bowed her acknowledgement with more grace than she had hitherto exhibited.

Fredericks reached for her hand and held it longer than the occasion seemed to warrant. And it was well that she could not read the evil expression in his eyes as his glance wandered over her from head to foot.

"Mr. Farrel tells me you are quite a dancer and a singer," he declared. "I am giving a party to a number of my friends to-night, and I want you to do your best."

"I'll try," the young girl said simply.

While the manager addressed a few questions to the girl, Fredericks studied her face and figure.

He was forced to admit that she was one of the most bewitching creatures he had ever met in all his sinful career.

With a slow, deliberate motion he drew out his watch.

Farrel saw it and nodded.

"I will send my car for you at eight o'clock to-night," Fredericks said to the girl. "I want you to come early enough so you can have a little rehearsal with the pianist I have engaged. Will that suit you?"

Jane gave her assent readily.

"You can go now, Miss Wilton," the manager told her. "But be here no later than eight to-night. Good-by."

The girl took her departure happy in the thought that her career was about to begin on the stage. She had barely closed the door behind her when Fredericks reached into his pocket and drew out a check book.

Farrel accepted the check and put it in one of the desk drawers.

After an exchange of a few more words, they separated.

That night Broadway was unusually crowded with automobiles. Most of them were expensive cars owned by men of wealth.

Quite a number of them stopped in front of a tall building, whose interior was divided into apartments occupied only by rich bachelors.

On the fifth floor Fredericks had engaged a palatial suite. It was composed of a reception room, smoking room, a bedroom and a large room used for special purposes.

Besides this there was a kitchen and a pantry, where his Japanese servant presided.

When Fredericks announced that he intended to give a stagg party, everyone invited, came. He was known as a host who never did things by half.

And his entertainments were what most men called "spicy."

At an early hour the Japanese servant began to make the necessary preparations.

Champagne and whiskey were put on ice. One end of the large room was cleared for the use of the dancers and singers. On a small platform stood a piano of the best make.

As the guests arrived they were received by Fredericks. It was easy for him to make them feel at home.

They assembled first in the smoking room where drinks were served by the Jap.

And while they drank themselves into a hilarious state of mind, several young girls clustered about the piano and began a rehearsal directed by Mr. Cavello.

At the other end of the large room the banquet table was arranged. The clock struck ten when the doors swung open and Fredericks entered followed by his guests.

While they were seated around the table, the singing and dancing began.

Most of the girls were seasoned performers. They seemed to know what was expected of them. Utterly devoid of modesty, they danced almost nude.

And their smiles flung at the men were brazen and daring.

Each one of them drew a round of applause. They were also served with drinks which proved to have the desired effect.

Then finally Jane Wilton's turn came. She was

frightened half to death. She had been watching the other girls and she hid her face with shame at what she saw.

Evidently nervous, she approached the piano at a sign from Mr. Cavello.

Her shyness and show of modesty were genuine. There was nothing affected about her. Dressed in a short skirt and with bare shoulders and arms, she presented a ravishingly beautiful picture.

Her face was changing color instantly.

From crimson it turned to white, and the expression in her luminous and innocent eyes was one almost of fright.

"Who is she?" asked the man seated next to Fredericks.

"A new celebrity fresh from the sticks," the latter answered with boisterous laugh.

"Gad, she is a little beauty," came back.

"I never saw anything so bewitching," exclaimed another.

"Where did you get her?" a third wanted to know.

Fredericks answered no questions.

Jane Wilton had begun to sing. It was a melodious ballad, and she sang it well. Her voice, a low mezzo, did not fail to bring a response. It was pleasing indeed.

She was applauded to the echo. Jane smiled and bowed.

But the little dance she did carried off the house. While awkward to a degree, it was not devoid of grace. The inimitable way in which she did it was what made the hit.

At its conclusion the girls were invited to be seated at the table.

It had been arranged that seats were left vacant between every two men. Jane Wilton, of course, sat

next to Fredericks. And he took mighty good care that none of his guests made too free with her.

Wine was passed around frequently. Most of the girls drank with an abandon which indicated that this sort of a thing was nothing new to them.

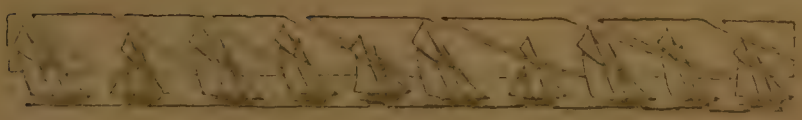
Jane Wilton, however, refused to drink. She glanced shyly at the host, trouble in her eyes.

He was the man who was giving her the first chance. She was afraid to offend him. After repeated coaxing she sipped a little of the sparkling fluid. The effect was almost instantaneous.

Her cheeks reddened and her eyes shone like diamonds. But not for a single moment did she lose her modesty.

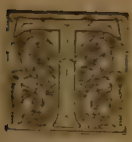
Some of the other girls, urged on by their companions, drank immoderately. And they began to behave themselves in a manner that shocked Jane not a little.

As for the men, they seemed to have lost all decency. They told risque jokes and laughed like fools.



Chapter 178

A FATAL DRINK



HE HOUR was growing late and all the guests were in a hilarious mood. A new program was staged by Mr. Cavello. One girl gave an exhibition that elicited howls of delight from the guests, but Jane Wilton looked away in shame. She had never seen anything so devoid of modesty.

Another girl was seated on a man's knee and she was fondling his hair while he kissed her.

Then they began to disappear two by two. Whenever a guest took his departure, one of the girls accompanied him. And as each girl left, she was handed a check by the host.

Jane Wilton, watched them go, wondering as to who would select her for a partner.

Mr. Cavello was last to leave which left her alone with Fredericks.

"Before you go, I want to have a chat with you, Miss Wilton," he told her. "Come with me into the sitting room."

She followed him slowly, her young heart filled with vague misgivings. And she watched him as he placed a number of pillows on the divan and pointed to the seat thus prepared for her.

"I am very much interested in you," he began, as he took a seat beside her. "You have wonderful talent, Miss Wilton."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, smiling her appreciation.

"Indeed I do," was the quick response. "And you

are too good for this sort of thing. You have the personality and the looks to make a star performer. What you need is more teaching along a special line."

The young girl hardly understood what Fredericks was driving at.

"It is too bad that you fell into the hands of a man like this Farrel," the latter went on. "You are too good for an ordinary chorus. You have a very fine voice, which, if cultivated properly, ought to give you a place in the front ranks of opera singers."

"Oh, Mr. Fredericks," she cried, blushing, "you flatter me too much."

"Not at all, my dear child. I am speaking the truth and I am sincere about it. I saw to-night that you don't like dancing. You are too modest. As a singer you will not be required to make such a hideous display of yourself."

After a slight pause she said slowly:

"I don't like dancing. I like to sing, though, but I never thought I had much of a voice."

"But you have," he insisted.

His words were evidently having the desired effect, for she began to steal glances at Fredericks. He was well aware of this.

"As I said before," he spoke again, "I have taken a great interest in you. I understand you came to New York to make your career. But you can never hope to amount to anything unless you have the proper training and backing. Now if you will allow me, I'll see to it that you get both."

"You are too kind, sir," the young girl cried. "I could not——"

"Don't say that," he cut her short. "You want to succeed, don't you?"

"Yes."

"And you want to see your name blazing in front of a first class theater some day, don't you?"

"Yes, I often thought how wonderful that would be, Mr. Fredericks. It has always been one of my most wonderful dreams."

"I'll make your dream come true, girlie," he exclaimed, reaching for her hand. "Let me be your friend and protector. I'll advance you the money, if you want it that way. If not, I'll foot the bill of your musical education without."

"That would be expecting too much," Jane interrupted.

"Not a bit. Money is no object to me. What good is it to a man if he can not do some good with it. I would not make such an offer to any one of the girls you saw here to-night. But you are different. Why, it would be a shame to let you go back to that old shack where I saw you this morning."

Jane Wilton was debating with herself and she was weakening.

Could it be possible that she had at last found a man who recognized her ability? She had read of philantrophists who spend thousands to further the musical education of poor but talented girls.

"Won't you let me take care of you," Fredericks pleaded. "I never wanted anything so bad in all my life. Perhaps my motive is a selfish one. I always wanted the honor and distinction of being the sponsor for a real singer.

"And you'll show this town something that will startle the music lovers within six months. You'll be a headliner, I am sure of it.

"A personal friend of mine is one of the best vocal teachers in this country. He has a method that never fails in bringing young singers to the front.

"You have the natural voice. You could do wonders with it if you got into the hands of the right man.

"I'll make the arrangements to-morrow. Now don't refuse, Miss Wilton. There is nothing wrong in us forming a friendship like this. Just think, some day you may appear in your litle home town and stand your old friends on their heads with your voice."

Slowly, by degrees, the young girl became convinced. It was to be nothing but a friendship. Had he not made that plain?

Other girls had made rapid progress in their chosen profession on the stage just because they had the financial backing and the "pull."

Her vanity had been aroused to such a degree that she really believed herself capable of doing the things this man predicted for her.

And after all, why should she refuse this man's proposition.

"Do—do you think it is proper to let you do that?" she inquired timidly.

"Why not?" Fredericks laughed. "It is being done every day in New York."

For a while she hesitated, then finally nodded.

"Alright, I'll accept your proposition, Mr. Fredericks . But you must allow me to pay back every dollar as soon as I am able."

"We'll discuss that later, Miss Wilton. Now let us celebrate our friendship with a drink."

She drew back with a shudder.

"No—no, I would rather not," she said with a little gasp. "I don't like wine. Besides, it is very late I must be going."

"I'll send you home in my car, girlie. Don't worry about that."

Continued in next number

Tell Your Own Fortune!

M'lle LeNormand's
Only Genuine and Complete

Fortune Telling Cards

Instructive and Amusing

THE celebrated Fortune Teller M'lle LeNormand has foretold the Emperor Napoleon I., his ruin and the plotting of his relatives. Everything came to pass precisely as she had predicted. By special desire of Napoleon I., M'lle LeNormand presented him the cards from which the prophecy has been made, and also her written interpretation and instructions.

Amongst the Imperial Family Treasure this Gift was the most valued and treasured article.

The son of Napoleon III., having become possessed of this relic, could not escape his fate, however, being killed at an early age while battling for the English in the African campaign.

George Korn, native of Alsatia, a sailor and linguist, speaking German, French and English was captured by the Zulu tribe who had become possessed of the interpretations, instructions and cards taken from the body of Napoleon's son. Whilst in captivity, Korn often saw these cards.

Only these Cards and Nothing Else can be thy Savior

were his continual thoughts. Under the impulse of this inspiration he informed the chief of the magical power of these cards, which in possession of an enemy would cause dire disaster to his family as well as himself. Thoroughly frightened the chief gave this treasure to Korn and escorted him to the seacoast far from his place of captivity. After various wanderings and adventures he arrived at the German colony Kameron, where he secured a position on board a Hamburg merchant ship; and through these events we became possessed of the *Genuine Cards*, the handwritten interpretation and instructions how to use them.

M'lle LeNormand destroyed her cards and instructions before her death and had the ashes inclosed in a vessel of lead and which was laid in her tomb according to her last will, so these interpretations written for Napoleon I., and so cleverly saved by Korn were the only and genuine existing. These cards—Oraculum—have been tried in important events and are indeed "*Answers of Destiny.*" For the believers it is a sacred treasure and in many instances an article of great value. Unbelievers can pass many tedious hours pleasantly in many ways, particularly in answering delicate questions correctly or otherwise. M'lle LeNormand's instructions in both English and German are complete and plain, and can readily be interpreted by everybody.

Price 50 Cents

Agents can make large sales and earn good profits. Very easy to sell. Enclose amount in postage-stamps and secure sample copy of terms and instructions.

You can order these cards from person delivering this book or we send them well packed, by mail, postage prepaid on receipt of price.

BARCLAY & CO.

P. O. Box 847
CINCINNATI, O.

Printed in U. S. A.